

When I was an eighth grader, there was a day that was so painful I still remember it clearly—IT WAS MRS. SMITH SPEECH CLASS. I was to give a speech about New York in an English class. I was so nervous, I decided to try my speech out on a group of friends the day before. My fear made me cocky. I delivered the whole speech to my friends calling the city Yew Nork and acting like a clown. You can guess what happened. During my speech the next day, every time I said New York I stumbled. I just couldn't get the words out. The more I stumbled the more nervous I got. The students were laughing and the teacher was mad. It was awful. I FAILED TERRIBLY AT MY FIRST SPEECH.

But that failure taught me something. I tried to never act like a show-off again, no matter how nervous I was.

I LEARNED THAT FAILURE IS AN ODD KIND OF GIFT. Now that everyone in that class knew the worst, I could do, I realized there was nowhere I could go but up!

Jesus tells another parable. This one is about a father and two sons. The father tells the first son to go and work in the vineyard. **The son says sure and then doesn't go.** The father tells the second son to go and that one says NO, but then later goes. Then Jesus asks the religious leaders, *"Which of the sons did the will of the father?" They say the second son of course.* Jesus says to them, *"You are the son that did not go—WHY??? Because you chose not to go into God's vineyard, tax collectors and prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God before you."* Imagine their shock. It's like saying an ex-con will get into the kingdom before a church council member. (Remember, Jesus is speaking to leaders of the synagogue.)

The point of the parable is this:

- Everything depends on **going into the vineyard and doing God's work.**
- God is looking for people who will go, and according to the Bible, **a person who has failed is more likely to respond to God's Call.**
- **AT THE END: They All Knew They NEEDED GOD**

There is a parable--about two sisters who worked as babysitters in their community. A young couple had recently moved into the neighborhood. They hired the younger of the two sisters to sit with their children.

Imagine their surprise when they came home to find their home a complete mess, with their kids looking haggard, and the babysitter half asleep on the couch.

The next day, however, the children excitedly told their parents how they had fun with the new babysitter, and how she had helped them do some assignments including saying their prayers. ***But this did not change the parent's decision to fire the babysitter.***

The next time the couple needed a sitter they hired the older sister. They were greatly impressed when they got home this time to discover the house was tidy and the kids were already asleep. ***"The kids have been like angels,"*** the older girl announced, and, gratefully, the couple gave her an extra tip.

The next morning the kids came complaining to their parents, accusing the babysitter of yelling at them with swear words, calling her boyfriend instead of helping them with their assignments, and then forcing them to go to bed early while she went outside and smoked and talked with some of her friends.

Now, if you were in the shoes of these parents, which of the babysitters will you hire the next time?

Barbara Brown Taylor said, "Wisdom is not gained by knowing what is right. Wisdom is gained by practicing what is right, and noticing what happens when that practice succeeds and when it fails."

GOD NEEDS PEOPLE WHO WILL ANSWER HIS CALL TO WORK IN HIS VINEYARD. We don't have to be trained teachers or organizers. We don't even have to be certain about what we believe. We certainly

don't need to be a success. **WE NEED TO GO — to practice what is right.** *The Bible says that the vineyard was filled with failures. So you're a failure? Fine.*

Jacob was a failure. In another story of two sons, Jacob stole the inheritance from his brother Esau by deceiving their father, Isaac. As a result, Jacob had to run for his life. Years later he returned home to face his brother. Jacob was worried. He didn't know how Esau would react when he saw him, so Jacob camped overnight at the River Jabbock while he worked up his courage. In the middle of the night he had a wrestling match with a stranger. Just when Jacob thought he might be was winning, the man reached out, touched Jacob's thigh, and his hip was thrown out of joint. Jacob knew he was defeated. In pain he knew he could not win. So he grabbed hold of the stranger, hung on for dear life, and demanded a blessing. The angel-stranger blessed him. But this time Jacob doesn't get the blessing by being sneaky. **This blessing he receives in pain is a blessing he can only receive as a gift.** **VIDEO....FLINT**

Being a failure doesn't necessarily mean that we will listen to God and work in the vineyard. Failure just might teach us that we cannot make it on our own.

Abraham learned that. Abraham failed over and over again, but he went when God called. **Moses too.** Moses was an impatient man and a poor public speaker but he led the people of Israel out of slavery. **And Jacob...** Jacob, must have really looked like a failure when he went limping home to ask his brother's forgiveness. **Jesus, too,** was regarded as a failure. Jesus of Nazareth staggered on bleeding feet toward the cross. Then he stumbled forth from the tomb, lurching toward the resurrection, bearing on his body the signs of the defeat that was victory for all.

The world would call all of these people failures. However, they had something very important in common.

THEY ALL KNEW THEY NEEDED GOD.

Yes, without God on the scene, Abraham, Moses, Jacob and even Jesus would not have accomplished all that they had done in the world—AND FOR THE WORLD.

And what about you and me?? LOOK IN A MIRROR, LOOK AT YOUR LIFE. What have you accomplished so far? School-Relationships-Property-Hello/Good-Bye-How Many days have you been able to be a part of? We all have those days when we ask God, WHY? **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF LIFE?** Some of you are at the beginning still, some of you are reaching the peak and wondering, **WHAT IS NEXT!**

Wherever you are...WE ALL NEED GOD!!! Because the truth of the matter is, now that we live in a statistical society, the facts show, those who don't acknowledge their SPIRITUAL SIDE, have a void, and emptiness...but those that BELIEVE IN GOD, **WHO NEED GOD...IN THE MIDST OF THEIR "FAILURE" THERE CAN BE A CHANGE, IN A MOMENT, IN THE "Twinkle of an Eye."** **If WE TURN TO HIM, AND GO INTO THE VINYARD LIKE Abraham, Moses, Jacob and even Jesus DID. OUR LIVES CAN BE FILLED WITH VICTORY...WITH PURPOSE AGAIN.**

Some years ago there was a story about a student at the University of Michigan who, having failed his courses, climbed into the attic of a church and stayed there for many months. He didn't want his parents to know about his failure. At night he would come down into the church in Ann Arbor to get clothing from the church's Clothing Bank that were clothes that were left over from the church's rummage sales. Then he would found FOOD in the church kitchen—leftovers from church suppers. He suffered terribly from loneliness. Eventually he was discovered, and experienced acceptance from the church. **Somewhere he had gotten the notion that FAILURE IN OUR SOCIETY IS UNACCEPTABLE.**

FAILURE DOES NOT MATTER IN THE EYES OF GOD, WHAT MATTERS IS WHAT YOU DO AFTER YOU HAVE FAILED... Think of what we could do if we *all* knew that, and all believed that and went forward for the sake of God's Kingdom. **REMEMBER, Judas, AFTER HE FAILED JESUS, TOOK HIS LIFE.**

However, when Peter failed Jesus, he continued to follow him. WHY? He accepted his gift of forgiveness and also forgave himself. He saw his "FAILURES" as "SUCCESES" and became the "ROCK" the foundation of the church and its FUTURE. And you? WHAT WILL YOUR "FAILURES" BECOME FOR JESUS IN OUR CHURCH TODAY? Amen.